

SUSTAINED BY GOD'S LOVE

By Suzanne Lutz

As we grieved over our son's suicide, Heavenly Father blessed our family with an outpouring of His love.

Because of a history of clinical depression, poor self-esteem, and difficult circumstances, I had always struggled with feeling God's love for me. I had a strong testimony of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith, but when it came to knowing that my Heavenly Father knew me personally and loved me, I felt a void.

One Sunday morning I left church early, feeling discouraged, and arrived home to discover that our 18-year-old son had chosen to take his life. It was a shock but not a surprise, as he had struggled for several years with an extreme chemical imbalance that distorted his thoughts and stole his hope.

As news of our loss reached our ward family, our home teachers and Relief Society presidency were the first to arrive at our home. Other ward and family members followed with loving embraces and compassionate hearts. Throughout the month, we were surrounded by loving friends who brought us gifts of food, flowers,

money, music, and a beautiful painting of the Savior embracing a young man. The young men and their leaders cleaned up our yard, trimmed bushes, and even finished a project my son had started on our deck. Some anonymous young women brought cookies.

We greatly appreciated the gifts of service and substance, but it was the less tangible gifts that touched our hearts the most. We heard not one word of judgment, not one insensitive comment. Those who extended their sweet love to us truly exemplified Alma's charge to his people at the Waters of Mormon: bearing our burdens with us, mourning with us, and comforting us (see Mosiah 18:8–9). I know that Heavenly Father heard the many prayers offered for our family and that He poured out His love and blessings upon us abundantly.

I felt His love most poignantly on the morning we made the funeral arrangements. I awoke with the lyrics of a hymn running through my mind:



“Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee. He never will suffer the righteous to fall. He is at thy right hand” (“Cast Thy Burden upon the Lord,” *Hymns*, no. 110). Those words strengthened me through the long hours of that difficult day.

Over the years since my son's death, the concern of our dear ward family has been constant, especially at anniversaries. Notes of encouragement and love are frequent.



GOD LOVES US COMPLETELY

“Though we are incomplete, God loves us

completely. Though we are imperfect, He loves us perfectly. Though we may feel lost and without compass, God’s love encompasses us completely. . . .

“What this means is that, regardless of our current state, there is hope for us. No matter our distress, no matter our sorrow, no matter our mistakes, our infinitely compassionate Heavenly Father desires that we draw near to Him so that He can draw near to us [see D&C 88:63].”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “The Love of God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 22, 23.

I no longer have doubts about being loved by Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. I feel wrapped in arms of divine compassion. This assurance carried me through the most difficult experience of my life and continues to carry me. God’s love is so real that it has changed who I am. I now have the confidence and strength to endure.

The birth and death of Jesus Christ are so much more meaningful

to me now, and I worship Him for His gifts of Atonement and Resurrection. Relying on the strength of the Lord and feeling His love has filled me with faith and blessed me with hope. At times when sorrow seems unbearable, He helps me bear the burden. His love came as an unexpected gift, and it continues to bless me in the most wonderful ways. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

Note: Because of the anguish and uncertainty caused by the suicide of a loved one, prophets have provided needed insights. See, for example, M. Russell Ballard, “Suicide: Some Things We Know, and Some We Do Not,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1987, 6–9. See also the video “Sitting on the Bench: Thoughts on Suicide Prevention,” [lds.org/go/benchE715](https://www.lds.org/go/benchE715).